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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work

Statement submitted by International Network of Liberal Women, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2006/1.

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Statement

The activities of the International Network of Liberal Women (INLW) are inspired by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The INLW applies those principles, on which the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is also based.

At the fiftieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), in relation to "participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work", the International Network of Liberal Women states:

Twenty-five years after the entry into force (1981) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), neutral gender policies are insufficient.

The Convention was generated because the Charter of the United Nations, as well as other instruments guaranteeing equality and non-discrimination, did not in practice ensure specific rights for women.

Based on the previous models established by some men and a few women who had reached the same level in different status, equal treatment between men and women cannot be guaranteed.

At the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, "Beijing + 10: Gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" it was recognized that the empowerment of women is the most powerful tool for achieving development and poverty reduction and that the remaining obstacles must be overcome. INLW believes that the contribution of women to development must be recognized. The climate of structural change which is being introduced in today's economy and in the advanced countries of the OECD demonstrates the need for these principles to be introduced at the global level.

Recognition of the contribution of women to society in private life is accepted, but her contribution to economic, social, work and political structures should be facilitated.

Peace, development and equality are the three main goals that societies should adopt to face the future and are the thread leading from the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing.

Women, who traditionally had not been able to participate in managing the changes and the political and social processes affecting them, must be able to participate in decision-making processes in the economic, social and political worlds.

The obstacles preventing women from participating openly in the economy are structural in nature.

The experience brought by women can be a source of hope for the future. If they are allowed to be, women are well-placed to meet the challenges the future will bring us.

Work

The point must be reached where public opinion recognizes the contributions that men and women, under the same conditions, can make to shared family and work responsibilities. We believe that job segregation of women should be avoided because it increases unemployment, accentuates the imbalances that exist between men and women and produces some inequalities that go beyond inequality in employment.

INLW wishes to assist in the process of raising awareness in our society in favour of equal opportunity.

Education

At the world conference "Education for All" (Dakar 1990) the importance of educating girls and women was stressed.

Education for women is necessary for their participation in social and economic life, and essential to escape poverty in developing countries. The right to education has been enshrined explicitly in international conventions and is universally accepted.

In countries with appropriate public policies, the presence of girls in the educational system is increasing and results in benefits to society, but the majority of illiterate adults in the world are women and most children without schooling are girls.

Health

It must be acknowledged that women are discriminated against in the area of health. By way of example, each year over a half million women die during pregnancy or childbirth because of unreliable health care.

The incorporation of gender in health research can give new meaning to the health-care system, both in preventive care and its educational, social and legal aspects.

One example is that women and girls receive health care only in reference to motherhood, without taking into account the integral health of women from puberty to old age. In practice, we believe that different treatment than for men's health is appropriate, because men and women are physically unequal.

Therefore, INLW makes the following recommendations:

- Include a gender perspective in statistics and promote technical advisory services for the presentation of reports.
- Apply the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, in order to overcome gender segregation in the labour market.
- Adopt job evaluation systems based on gender-neutral criteria, including information on salaries and unemployment.
- Prepare statistical reports on changes for women in rural areas, taking into account that most women in developing countries live in such areas.
- Implement training and self-help programmes for women in rural areas.

- Ensure access to land ownership.
- Grant credit and loans to women as independent persons and give them the right to sign contracts.
- Finance literacy programmes, with the participation of the women themselves, which take their interests into account.
- Facilitate access to education in science and research.
- Include women in new information technology.
- Introduce a gender perspective in carrying out health programmes so that men and women can receive gender-appropriate health care.
- Adopt appropriate measures intended to change sociocultural patterns, especially those affecting women's health (for instance female circumcision and other forms of castration) by compiling and then distributing data on these practices.
- Avoid discrimination against women in preventive health care and in combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis in particular.
- Take measures to enable women's active participation in primary health care as educators in the prevention of the most common infections.
- Promote programmes to raise awareness of the elimination of violence against women.
- Take preventive and punitive measures to eradicate all types of prostitution, exploitation, trafficking in women and sex tourism where children and women are victims.

Education for all is the best way to establish democracy, tolerance and international peace, whose basic principles are justice and recognition that all human beings are born free and equal.

One of the objectives of INLW is to begin reflecting on the new values and abilities that must be developed to achieve peace.

Peace, development and equality are the three major goals that societies must accept in facing the future.

For this purpose, they must recover from historical memory the contributions that unknown women have made in times of war.

Women preserve social order, educate for peace, organize to coordinate the delivery of basic necessities and maintain some level of normalcy in daily life. Women coordinate aids to cooperation, establish NGOs and take on the task of telling the world the reality of war.

Women should intervene in the prevention and resolution of armed conflicts because they are its main victims.

The culture of peace, with the values of dialogue, equality, respect for the dignity of all human beings, especially women, is the most effective means towards democracy, tolerance and international peace.